



# Office of the President

NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

November 2, 2020

Dear Lumberjacks,

As we welcome November, NAU celebrates Native American Heritage Month, which honors the culture, heritage, rich ancestry, contributions, and traditions of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people.

Located near the Navajo Nation and serving students from 113 tribal nations, Native American Heritage Month is an important celebration for the NAU community. NAU sits at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, on homelands sacred to Native Americans throughout the region. NAU honors past generations who have lived here for millennia as well as present and future peoples who will forever call this place home.

"This is a time for reflection and appreciation of the histories, resiliency, and determination of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian peoples," said **Ora Marek-Martinez**, executive director of the Native American Cultural Center. "We hold a unique place in American history and society that is often overlooked. I encourage each of you to take time to learn about the Indigenous peoples who cared for the lands from which you come, learn about their history and their cultures, and find ways you might give back to these same people."

"We welcome you to join us in remembrance, in unity, and in celebration of our beautiful Native American communities," she added. "Qe'ci'yew'yew' and ahe'hee', thank you!"

The NAU community is invited to a number of events during Native American Heritage Month, including a movie screening, speakers, and story-telling. Read the [NAU News story](#) for detailed information and to register.

We recognize our history and commitment to local communities, and we aim to be the nation's leading university serving Native Americans. Our goal is to increase enrollment, retention, and graduation rates of Native American and Indigenous students, providing caring and comprehensive academic and cultural support.

With 1,961 American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students enrolled at NAU, we have the 11th highest enrollment of Native American and Alaska Native graduate and undergraduate students among all U.S. four-year public schools.

We also have the 13th highest undergraduate and third highest graduate enrollment of Native American students among all four-year public schools in the U.S. Last year, Diversity Issues in Higher Education Magazine recognized NAU as seventh for bachelor degrees awarded nationally to Native American students in all disciplines.

I am proud of the many accomplishments of NAU's Native American faculty, staff, and students. They span education, research, discovery, and community service.

Last year, the Native American Cultural Center hosted more than 391 events, including speaker series, student forums, and workshops. Our students also took part in an eight-day educational exchange with Indigenous students in Australia and New Zealand.

Please join us in honoring the culture, traditions, and celebrations of Native American, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rita", written in a cursive style.

**Rita Hartung Cheng**  
President